2: Murra E-4 (no date) 1943 SD6 Cayapa SD6

THE CAYAPA AND COLORADO

By JOHN MURRA

INTRODUCTION

The *Cayapa* and the *Colorado* are the last surviving Indian groups in the lush western lowlands of Ecuador (maps 1 and 6). Once an area of extensive Indian occupation, western Ecuador is now inhabited by a Spanish-speaking population of mixed Indian, Negro, and white ancestry, known as montuvios. The *Cayapa* and *Colorado* have precariously managed to hang on to their jungle homes. Speaking closely related if mutually unintelligible languages of the *Barbacoan* division of the *Chibchan* family, they represent the southernmost extension of that major division. Comparative studies with other *Chibchan*-speaking groups in Highland and eastern Colombia, with *Quechua*-speaking Indians in Highland Ecuador, and with various Montaña groups should prove of considerable culture-historical interest.

THE CAYAPA

The *Cayapa* are a riverain people inhabiting the lowlands of northwestern Ecuador. Sprinkled through the jungles of Esmeraldas Province, an area of difficult colonization and control, they managed for centuries to avoid the enslavement suffered by their Highland neighbors or the ethnic annihilation of most Coast aborigines. Only in the past few decades have their settlements been pushed back into the hills by Spanish-speaking montuvio and Negro homesteaders. World War II requirements in balsa wood, rubber, and other tropical commodities have accelerated this process of displacement and acculturation.

The Cayapa River and its affluents, from the mouth of the Anzole to the foot of the Andes, are the main area of *Cayapa* settlement. Barrett (1925) found three concentration spots: Punta Venado, Sapayo Grande, and San Miguel, corresponding to three political, tribal divisions, which might since have shifted or amalgamated. In addition, small groups of *Cayapa*, in various degrees of acculturation, are found in the Santiago Valley and along the coast into Colombia. Estimates of their numbers vary but hover around a mean of 2,000.

The chief source and authority on the *Cayapa* remains S. A. Barrett's monograph (1925). Barrett visited them in 1908–9, long enough to bring

3: Barrett E-5 (1908-1909)1925
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this section is a form of malarial fever locally called paludismo; but this malady is so mild in comparison with the diseases above mentioned as to be almost negligible in a comparative consideration of the general health conditions of the region. The attacks of paludismo on newcomers are often severe, and now and then result fatally, but a native or an old resident of the region is usually fairly immune from it.

It is said that typhoid is entirely unknown; indeed no signs of it were observed during the author's stay in the region. Dysentery, which is such a serious malady in certain parts of the tropics, is little known here, though sporadic cases occur; in fact, two cases came under the author's observation, but only one of these was fatal, and this largely by reason of a complication of conditions combined with inadequate care.

It may be said, therefore, that the region inhabited by the Cayapa, and in fact the whole Province of Esmeraldas, is very healthful in comparison with other parts of the tropics.

Surrounding Peoples

The only people at present known to have close linguistic affinity with the Cayapa are the Colorados of the upper course of the Rio Esmeraldas. Dr D. G. Brinton[19] places the Cayapa in what he terms the Barbacoas linguistic stock, taking that name from a people formerly living on the upper Rio Patia in south-

[19] Brinton, The American Race, pp. 196–199, New York, 1891.

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ern Colombia. Brinton's limits of this linguistic stock are not very clearly defined, but are given roughly as extending from the headwaters of the Rio Daule, which empties into the Gulf of Guayaquil, northward to the vicinity of the Rio Patia, which empties into the ocean north of Tumaco in southern Colombia, thus extending from about one degree south to two and one-half degrees north latitude. The information at Brinton's disposal did not enable him to locate exactly the various peoples which he includes in this stock, but he names the Barbacoas, Cayapas, Colorados or Sacchas, Cuaiqueros, Iscuandes, Manivis, and Telembis. It is not at all unlikely that the peoples whom Brinton calls Barbacoas, Iscuandes, Telembis, and perhaps also the Cuaiqueros, are in reality only small bands of Cayapa who had gone into the localities which still bear these several names, and that the vocabularies and other information on which he based the classification were collected from them at these places, with the result that these people came into literature as four distinct divisions.[11] The same thing has happened in many instances in North America,

[11] It is highly probable that the meager vocabularies on which Brinton based his classification of these several supposedly distinct groups of people under the one family name were recorded by various systems of orthography, used by travelers whose mother tongues were different, and who in most, if not all, cases were not trained in the study of aboriginal languages. This would be sufficient to account for the considerable differences in the vocabularies—differences which, in the absence of further data, would warrant anyone in considering the various peoples as dialectically distinct one from another.

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hence it is now being found that a people speaking a single language appears in literature under several different names. As already pointed out, a few of the Cayapa at the present time are scattered along the coast from a point north of Tumaco to some distance south of Esmeraldas. These small bands near the coast are far more accessible to travelers and naturally would be encountered first by them. Hence it could very easily have happened that the several different peoples reported to Brinton, probably by as many different travelers, as separate groups, but whose languages proved to be closely related, were simply these bands of Cayapa who were then, as they are now, living apart from the main body along the Rio Cayapas. Furthermore, if the above assumption is true, it is probable that these Cayapa of the coast then recognized, as they do now, their identity with the main body of the people.

[103] The fact that almost all the rivers, and especially all the smaller streams, as well as other physiographical features of the whole region, mentioned by Brinton, still bear names that are of Cayapa origin, is strong evidence that the Cayapa at a comparatively early date had spread over this large area and that they were familiar with and probably in possession of, so far as other Indians were concerned, the territory from a point some distance north of Tumaco southward. It therefore seems very probable that what appeared to Brinton as several linguistically related groups are in reality parts of a single group, and that formerly, as now, the only other people so far reported who have any

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close linguistic affinity with the Cayapa were the Colorados.

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The dialect of the Colorados, however, is so different from that of the Cayapa as to be almost unintelligible to the latter. Their customs, dress, and general culture are also quite distinct, and their territory is of a very different character from that of the Cayapa, being decidedly mountainous, though not far enough inland to be at a great altitude. There is no political or social affinity between the two peoples; in fact, although belonging to the same linguistic stock, the only knowledge one has of the other is that gained from an occasional visit by two or three Cayapa to the Colorado country, or vice versa. It is told as one of the important events of recent times that in returning, several years ago, from a visit to Quito, the chief of the Punta Venado division of the Cayapa came by way of the Colorado country and spent several days there, and that he finally brought home with him a member of that tribe who visited on the Rio Cayapas for some days before returning to his own people.

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That the Cayapa have wider linguistic affiliations has been recently shown by Drs Beuchat and Rivet,[12] who set forth the fact that there is considerable affinity between the Barbacoas, of which the Cayapa is a dialect, and the Coconuco and Paniquita groups, both of which are in Colombia. The interrelations of the latter two

[12] Affinités des Langues du Sud de la Colombie et du Nord de l'Équateur (Groupes Paniquita, Coconuco et Barbacoa), par H. Beuchat et P. Rivet, extrait du *Muséon*, Louvain, 1910.

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Cholo

197 groups are much closer than are those of either with the Barbacoa, but there seem to be a sufficient number of features in common between these two Colombian stocks on the one hand, and the Cayapa and Colorado dialects on the other, to warrant the inclusion of all these in a larger group or linguistic family.

101 On the north the nearest Indian neighbors of the Cayapa are those commonly called by the ambiguous term "Cholos," and who live along the Rio Saija, a small stream which empties into the ocean at about 2° 50′ N., at a point nearly opposite the island of Gorgona. These people are entirely different from the Cayapa in language and culture; but there is a certain amount of intermingling between the two, and a marked [177] influence is exerted by the Cholos on some features of Cayapa culture, especially medicine practices.

The only other Indian neighbors of the Cayapa are the Quichua, or Kechua, descendants of the historic Inca peoples, who live in the interior valleys, the nearest [484] being those about Ibarra and Cotacachi. Although they are of an entirely different linguistic stock, there is here also a certain amount of intermingling, small parties of Quichua making occasional trips down to the coast, and small parties of Cayapa making occasional [487] trips into the mountains. At the present time, however, the trails are much neglected and are extremely difficult to travel, so that the intercourse is very slight.

177 The only other peoples with whom the Cayapa come into contact are the few European or North American whites, and the many negroes, descendants of former

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foothills of the Andes are reached. Thus, for example, Punta Venado, which is approximately 49 kilometers from the mouth of the river, has an altitude of 12 meters as compared to Telembí, approximately 77.5 kilometers from the river's mouth, which has an altitude of 22 meters (Wolf 1879:35). The volume of the waters carried by the rivers varies considerably. Depending upon the amount of rainfall, I have seen a rise and fall in the level of the Río Camerones of well over twenty feet within five hours. The rivers of this system cut through heavy clay soil, and the banks are not part of a flood plain but immediately form part of the hilly interior that is characteristic of the hinterland. The soil is predominantly a heavy saturated clay that is mostly reddish brown in color.

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Language. The Cayapa and the Colorado Indians who live in the tropical highlands about seventy miles down the western slopes of the Andes from Quito share the distinction of being the last two aboriginal groups in western Ecuador. Their languages, although not mutually intelligible, are closely related. Recently, B. Moore worked out some phonetic correspondences between

Cayapa and Colorado and thereby systematically proved the relationship that had always been assumed on purely inspectional grounds (Moore 1962). The most recent classification proposed by Greenberg places Cayapa-Colorado within the sub family called Paezan, which together with Chibchan proper belongs to the Macro-Chibchan family (Greenberg 1956). This classification is similar to that proposed by Mason (Mason 1950:180). A claim that Cayapa is closely related to Mayan is proposed by Professor Aquiles R. Perez T; however, the documentation is not convincing at present (Perez 1960: 491-494).

History. The first actually reliable information on the Cayapa comes from the pen of W. B. Stevenson, who visited them briefly in 1809. At that time, there was but one group of Cayapa (those who lived in the vicinity of Punta Venado). The chief, or alcalde, as Stevenson called him, carried a "baston, insignia of authority" which he presented to Stevenson. He then ordered the Indians to obey Stevenson ". . . and they advanced one after another to kiss the head of the baston, and accompanied me to the house of the alcalde, which was